

Wellness Notes

Fall Prevention*

(Part II)

Dealing with fear of falling

Many older adults, especially those who have fallen in the past restrict their physical activity because they are afraid of falling. This is not a good idea. When you are inactive, you lose muscle and become weaker. The weaker you are, the greater the chance there is that you will fall. So, by restricting physical activity, older adults actually increase their risk of falling. Also, when people are afraid, they tense their body which contributes to falls and injuries.

Ways to make your home safer

Some changes in your home environment may also decrease your chances of falling.

- Remove things you can trip over (such as papers, books, clothes, and shoes) from stairs and places where you walk.
- Remove small throw rugs or use double-sided tape to keep the rugs from slipping.
- Keep items you use often in cabinets you can reach easily without using a step stool.
- Have grab bars installed next to your toilet and in the tub or shower.
- Use non-slip mats in the bathtub and on shower floors.
- Improve the lighting in your home. As you get older, you need brighter light to see well. Lamp shades or frosted bulbs can reduce glare.
- Have handrails and lights installed on all staircases.
- Wear shoes that give good support and have thin non-slip soles.

Checking medicines

Have your doctor or pharmacist look at all the medicines you take (including ones that don't need prescriptions such as cold medicines). As you get older, the way some medicines work in your body can change. Some medicines, or combinations of medicines, can make you drowsy or light-headed which can lead to a fall.

Checking vision

Have your eyes checked regularly by an eye doctor. You may be wearing the wrong eyeglasses or have glaucoma or cataracts that limits your vision. Poor vision can increase your chances of falling.